

# Time-IN

## A NEW Way to Help Children Calm Themselves

**WHAT IS TIME-IN?** When children are upset, they need the help of caring adults to calm and quiet themselves. The most important thing to remember when children are hitting, biting, throwing, withdrawing, bullying, etc. is that they are not able to resolve it themselves. They need adults to both help them identify the problem and to help them fix it. In this context, the idea of “discipline” is not a useful or helpful place from which to begin. A more effective approach begins with an attitude of “What does this child need and how can I help meet this need?”

**The first step** in helping a child return to calm behavior is supporting her or him emotionally and energetically. Caregivers who are trusted by the child can be most successful doing this. **Time-In** involves placing a child **physically on or near an adult** for a short period of time and providing **calming words and sounds, positive facial signals, touch and firm but loving limits.**

### LAP TIME-IN: AGES 1-3

When telling a child to stop misbehaving doesn't work:

- A. Pick up the child and walk away from the scene.**
- B. Sit down in a quiet place and hold him or her on your lap. Make eye contact (if culturally appropriate) and say, “You’re upset. Let me help you calm yourself.” (The goal is to help children learn to self-quiet.)**
- C. Talk about what happened in an understanding way. Describe your limits regarding the problem behavior. Example:** (“Children aren’t allowed to hit each other here. If you hit, I’ll stop you and you will sit on my lap until you can stop hitting.”)

**Another example:** “I know you want candy before supper. You must stop hitting me. Go sit in your father’s lap until you can quiet yourself and I can finish cooking.”

### COOLING OFF TIME-IN: AGES 3-6

For a child who needs time to cool off following rowdy, disruptive behavior, say, “I can see that you’re out of control. Please come and sit by me so that I can help you get quiet.” Let her decide how long she needs OR set a timer – one (1) minute for each year of age.

When the time-in is over, avoid joyful embraces and hugs, as this can seem like a reward for misbehaving and getting attention for it.

### CREATIVE PLAY TIME-IN: AGES 5-10 YEARS+

Children, especially boys, may be more able to think things through while engaging in other activities. Create focused experiences such as crafting, painting or building with Legos to help the child express his feelings. An observing and trusted adult nearby may allow the child to stay on task with the activity more easily.

When the child has had time to do something constructive with his energy, sit and talk with him. Have him tell you a story about what he has made. Use the story as a way of helping him process his feelings and to reflect on his behavior that caused the Time-In.

### TALK IT OUT TIME-IN: AGES 2-10

Children who have a close relationship with an adult and are sensitive, highly verbal, and know how to compromise, may respond this way. After an incident of rudeness, or thoughtlessness, say “Let’s go for a walk and talk about what just happened.” Hugging, talking, and creating physical closeness will get your point across more effectively. When a child is having a difficult time she needs more contact with you, not isolation.

Adapted from **TIME-IN TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN**, by Janae B. Weinhold, Ph.D.

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**Teach your child about inappropriate behavior with patience, persistence and positive interaction.**

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